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P R E F A C E.

THE preparation of the Index to the volume for the closing year 1891 suggests many points for reflection, to some of which it may be well to refer.

And first, one cannot repress a feeling of sadness at the loss of those friends and contributors to zoological science who have been taken from amongst us during the past twelve months. We have had to deplore the death of such well-known scientists as the late Prof. Martin Duncan, Dr. P. H. Carpenter, and Prof. H. N. Moseley, and of such old and valued correspondents as the late Mr. Thomas Cornish and the Rev. T. H. Frere.

But although their names have dropped out from the list of living zoologists, the work which each has done in his own particular line (whether it be important original research, or the patient collection of observed facts) will live in the memory of fellow-workers, and in the annals of Zoology.

In other respects the past year for us has been calm and uneventful. From the numerous communications which continue to reach us from all quarters, it is evident that the study of Natural History has lost none of its charm, and we are glad to welcome every year the advent of fresh workers in the field of Zoology. The Editor trusts that in the year to come he may count upon the cordial support which has hitherto been accorded to him, while he on his part will endeavour still further to increase the utility of a Journal which for more than forty years past has been regarded as a storehouse for accumulating the results of the out-door observation of animals, and a medium of communication for field-naturalists. It has been hinted by friendly critics that the pages of '*The Zoologist*' contain perhaps rather too much Ornithology to the exclusion of other branches of Zoology. But this only indicates the taste of a large number of contributors. Certainly if the Editor were

favoured with more papers on Mammals, Fishes, Reptiles, Mollusca, and Crustacea, they would be gratefully received, and much good would no doubt result if some of our contributors would occasionally turn their attention to other branches of Zoology than that with which they are most familiar. Remembering the old adage "*docendo discimus*," they would derive a new pleasure from the investigation of a new subject, and their researches might lead to the discovery of novel and perhaps important facts. And here a suggestion may be hazarded. During the past year the Editor has received a number of letters pointing out the inadequacy at the present day of Bell's 'British Quadrupeds' as a text-book (a fact of which he has long been cognizant), and urging the desirability of preparing something better. As a matter of fact, ever since 1874, when the second edition of Bell's work was published, the Editor has been engaged in collecting materials with a view to meet the demand which is now being made. These materials, however, are still far from complete, and although the number of British Mammals is comparatively limited, there are still many points upon which trustworthy statistics are wanting. For example, the period of gestation in certain species, their rate of growth, the average age which they attain, their weight, and measurements, taken from living or recently-killed specimens, their habits of migration and hibernation, the cause of variation in colour, of albinism, melanism, and so forth. On all these points there is still much to be ascertained, and those who can forward statistics will materially assist the preparation of such a new work as is now needed. There is no doubt that in the forty-eight volumes of 'The Zoologist' which have been published information is to be found on many of these points, but the want of a "General Index" makes the search for it extremely laborious. We have on former occasions called attention to this want, and we may again remind our readers that as the cost of preparing and printing a "General Index" would be considerable, it would not be expedient to undertake it unless every reader of 'The Zoologist' were to signify his or her willingness to take a copy of it when published. So long as there continues to be a hesitation to support the undertaking, so long, we fear, will a "General Index" remain unpublished.
Verbum sap.

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